



Navy Role in Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism: Background and Issues for Congress

Ronald O'Rourke
Specialist in Naval Affairs

June 4, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RS22373

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>				
1. REPORT DATE 04 JUN 2009	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Navy Role in Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism: Background and Issues for Congress				
5a. CONTRACT NUMBER				
5b. GRANT NUMBER				
5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER				
6. AUTHOR(S)				
5d. PROJECT NUMBER				
5e. TASK NUMBER				
5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave., SE, Washington, DC, 20540-7500				
8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER				
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				
10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)				
11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)				
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 13
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	

Summary

Statements from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and other Department of Defense (DOD) officials suggest that the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that is currently in progress may lead to an increased emphasis in future U.S. defense budgets on capabilities for conducting irregular warfare (IW) operations, such as counterinsurgency operations. In addition, counterterrorism (CT) operations have received an increased emphasis since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The Navy for several years has carried out a variety of IW and CT activities, and has taken some steps in recent years to strengthen its ability to conduct such activities. The overall issue for Congress is how much emphasis to place on IW and CT activities in future Navy budgets, and whether decisions reached by DOD on this issue in the QDR are appropriate. In addition to this overarching issue, the Navy's IW and CT activities pose some specific potential oversight issues for Congress. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
Longstanding Navy Activities	1
Initiatives Since 2005	2
Current Operations.....	3
FY2010 Funding Request.....	4
Navy Irregular Warfare Office.....	4
Global Maritime Partnership (Previously 1,000-Ship Navy)	5
Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC).....	5
Riverine Force	6
Global Fleet Stations (GFSs).....	6
Potential Oversight Issues for Congress.....	7
IW and CT in Future Navy Budgets.....	7
Specific Oversight Questions	10

Contacts

Author Contact Information	10
----------------------------------	----

Introduction

Statements from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and other Department of Defense (DOD) officials suggest that the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that is currently in progress may lead to an increased emphasis in future U.S. defense budgets on capabilities for conducting irregular warfare (IW) operations, such as counterinsurgency operations. In addition, counterterrorism (CT) operations have received an increased emphasis since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The Navy for several years has carried out a variety of IW and CT activities, and has taken some steps in recent years to strengthen its ability to conduct such activities. The overarching issue for Congress is how much emphasis to place on IW and CT activities in future Navy budgets, and whether decisions reached by DOD on this issue in the QDR are appropriate.

Background Longstanding Navy Activities

The Navy for several years has carried out a variety of IW and CT activities, including the following:

- Navy sailors, many of them individual augmentees (IAs), serving on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan in various mission areas;
- Tomahawk cruise missile attacks on suspected terrorist training camps and facilities, such as those reportedly conducted in Somalia on March 3 and May 1, 2008,¹ and those conducted in 1998 in response to the 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa;²
- operations by Navy special operations forces, known as SEALs, that are directed against terrorists;³
- surveillance by Navy ships and aircraft of suspected terrorists overseas;
- maritime intercept operations (MIO) aimed at identifying and intercepting terrorists or weapons of mass destruction at sea, or potentially threatening ships or aircraft that are in or approaching U.S. territorial waters—an activity that includes Navy participation in the multilateral Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI);⁴
- working with the Coast Guard to build maritime domain awareness (MDA)—a real-time understanding of activities on the world's oceans;

¹ Edmund Sanders, "U.S. Missile Strike in Somalia Kills 6," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2008; Stephanie McCrummen and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Airstrike Kills Somali Accused of Links to Al-Qaeda," *Washington Post*, May 2, 2008: A12; Eric Schmitt and Jeffrey Gettleman, "Qaeda Leader Reported Killed In Somalia," *New York Times*, May 2, 2008.

² For a recent article on the 1998 strikes, see Pamela Hess, "Report: 1998 Strike Built bin Laden-Taliban Tie," *NavyTimes.com (Associated Press)*, August 22, 2008.

³ SEAL is an acronym that stands for Sea, Air, and Land. For further discussion of the SEALs, see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

⁴ For more on the PSI, see CRS Report RL34327, *Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)*, by Mary Beth Nikitin.

- assisting the Coast Guard in port-security operations;⁵
- protection of forward-deployed Navy ships, an activity that was intensified following the terrorist attack on the Navy Aegis destroyer Cole (DDG-67) in October 2000 in the port of Aden, Yemen; and
- protection of domestic and overseas Navy bases and facilities.

Initiatives Since 2005

Since 2005, the Navy has implemented a number of initiatives intended to increase its IW and CT capabilities, including the following:

- establishing a Navy Irregular Warfare Office;
- establishing a multilateral **global maritime partnership** (originally known as the “1,000-ship navy” concept) for ensuring global maritime security;
- establishing the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC);
- reestablishing the Navy’s **riverine force**;
- establishing small sea bases called **Global Fleet Stations (GFSs)** in various regions around the world;
- establishing a reserve civil affairs battalion, an MIO intelligence exploitation pilot program, an intelligence data-mining capability at the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC), and a Navy Foreign Area Officer (FAO) community consisting of officers with specialized knowledge of foreign countries and regions;
- assuming command of a joint task force in the Horn of Africa, the detainee operation at Guantanamo, Cuba, and Fort Suse, a high-security prison in Iraq, and assuming the lead in defending the Haditha Dam in Iraq;
- procuring Automatic Identification Systems (AISs) for surface ships;⁶
- developing a CT mission module for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS);⁷
- developing Global Maritime Intelligence Integration (GMII) as part of Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC) and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA); and

⁵ See, for example, Emelie Rutherford, “Navy’s Maritime Domain Awareness System ‘Up And Running’,” *Defense Daily*, September 4, 2008; and Dan Taylor, “New Network Allows Navy To Track Thousands of Ships Worldwide,” *Inside the Navy*, September 8, 2008. For more on the Coast Guard and port security, see CRS Report RL33383, *Terminal Operators and Their Role in U.S. Port and Maritime Security*, by John Frittelli and Jennifer E. Lake, and CRS Report RL33787, *Maritime Security: Potential Terrorist Attacks and Protection Priorities*, by Paul W. Parfomak and John Frittelli.

⁶ The AIS is a transponder-like device that transmits a ship’s identification, position, course, speed, and other data to other ships and relevant authorities.

⁷ For more on the LCS, see CRS Report RL33741, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program: Background, Oversight Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

- engaging with the U.S. Coast Guard to use the National Strategy for Maritime Security to more rapidly develop capabilities for Homeland Security, particularly in the area of MDA.

Current Operations

The Department of the Navy, which includes the Navy and Marine Corps, states that:

We continue to impose local sea control, sustain power ashore and represent a major strategic role in Iraq and Afghanistan by providing critical force protection requirements; training, equipment, and assistance to our coalition partners....

Our overseas force posture is shaped principally by ongoing and projected operational commitments. This participation currently involves approximately 30,000 Marines conducting counterinsurgency, security cooperation, and civil-military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. On any given day there are approximately 14,500 Sailors ashore and another 9,200 afloat throughout the U. S. Central Command region conducting riverine operations, maritime infrastructure protection, explosive ordnance disposal, combat construction engineering, cargo handling, combat logistics, maritime security, and other forward presence activities. In collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Navy also conducts critical port operations, port and oil platform security, and maritime interception operations....

While forward, acting as the lead element of our defense-in-depth, naval forces will be positioned for increased roles in combating terrorism. They will also be prepared to act in cooperation with an expanding set of international partners to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster response, as well as contribute to global maritime security. Expanded Maritime Interdiction Operations (EMIO) are authorized by the President and directed by the Secretary of Defense to intercept vessels identified to be transporting terrorists and/or terrorist-related materiel that poses an imminent threat to the United States and its allies

Strike operations are conducted to damage or destroy objectives or selected enemy capabilities. Recent examples include simultaneous close air support missions that are integrated and synchronized with coalition ground forces to protect key infrastructure, deter and disrupt extremist operations or hostile activities, and provide overwatch for reconstruction efforts in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. They have also included small, precise attacks against terrorist cells, such as the 2007 missile attacks against terrorist sanctuaries in Somalia and the April 2009 rescue of an American ship captain. Among the various strike options, our sea-based platforms are unique and preeminent capabilities that will be maintained.

This versatility and lethality can be applied across the spectrum of operations, from destroying terrorist base camps, to protecting friendly forces involved in sustained counterinsurgency or stability operations, or to defeating enemy anti-access defenses in support of amphibious operations.

We are refocusing this strategic capability more intensely in Afghanistan in an effort to counter the increasing threat of a well-armed anti-Coalition militia, Taliban, al Qaeda, criminal gangs, narcoterrorists, and any other anti-government elements that threaten the peace and stability of Afghanistan. Our increased efforts to deter or defeat aggression and improve overall security and counter violent extremism and terrorist networks advances the interests of the U.S. and the security of the region. The FY 2009/FY 2010 contingency

operations request supports the expansion of capabilities sufficient to secure Afghanistan and prevent it from again becoming a haven for international terrorism and associated militant extremist movements.⁸

FY2010 Funding Request

The Navy states the following regarding its proposed FY2010 budget:

- “The FY 2010 budget ensures that our contemporary wartime requirements receive steady long-term funding similar to our conventional modernization programs. The increased procurement of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and other programs that support irregular warfare and capacity building reflect that shift.”⁹
- “[Navy research and development]initiatives support both traditional and irregular warfare demands in several aviation programs.”¹⁰
- “The FY 2010 [Navy] S&T [science and technology] portfolio is aligned to support naval S&T focus areas which consist of: power and energy; operational environments; maritime domain awareness, asymmetric and irregular warfare, information, analysis and communication; power projection; assure access and hold at risk; distributed operations; naval warrior performance and protection; survivability and self defense; platform mobility; fleet/force sustainment; and affordability, maintainability, and reliability.”¹¹

Navy Irregular Warfare Office

In July 2008, the Navy established the Navy Irregular Warfare Office, which is intended, in the Navy’s words, to “institutionalize current ad hoc efforts in IW missions of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency and the supporting missions of information operations, intelligence operations, foreign internal defense and unconventional warfare as they apply to [CT] and [counterinsurgency].” The office works closely with U.S. Special Operations Command, and reports to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for information, plans, and strategy.¹²

⁸ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) pp. 2-1 to 2-3.

⁹ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) p. 5-1. A similar statement is made on page 1-12.

¹⁰ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) p. 5-12.

¹¹ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) pp. 5-27 to 5-28.

¹² Zachary M. Peterson, “New Navy Irregular Warfare Office Works to Address ISR Shortfall,” *Inside the Navy*, September 1, 2008.

Global Maritime Partnership (Previously 1,000-Ship Navy)

The Global Maritime Partnership, previously known as the 1,000-ship Navy concept, is a U.S. Navy initiative to achieve an enhanced degree of cooperation between the U.S. Navy and foreign navies, coast guards, and maritime police forces, for the purpose of ensuring global maritime security against common threats. The Navy states that

A global maritime partnership is required that unites maritime forces, port operators, commercial shippers, and international, governmental and nongovernmental agencies to address our mutual concerns. This partnership increases all of our maritime capabilities, such as response time, agility and adaptability, and is purely voluntary, with no legal or encumbering ties. It is a free-form, selforganizing network of maritime partners – good neighbors interested in using the power of the sea to unite, rather than to divide.¹³

Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC)

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), headquartered at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA, was established informally in October 2005 and formally on January 13, 2006. The Department of the Navy states that NECC

is a global force provider of adaptive force packages of expeditionary capabilities to joint warfighting commanders, centrally managing the current and future readiness, resources, manning, training, and equipping of a scalable, self-sustaining and integrated expeditionary force of active and reserve sailors. Expeditionary sailors are deployed from around the globe in support of the new “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower.” NECC forces and capabilities are integral to executing the maritime strategy which is based on expanded core capabilities of maritime power: forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. To enable these, NECC provides a full spectrum of operations, including effective waterborne and ashore anti-terrorism force protection; theater security cooperation and engagement; and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

NECC leads the way in providing integrated active and reserve forces, highlighted by the seamlessly integrated operational forces of naval construction (Seabees), maritime expeditionary security (formerly coastal warfare), navy expeditionary logistics (Cargo Handling Battalions), explosive ordnance disposal, and the remaining mission capabilities throughout the command.

NECC is not a standalone or combat force, but rather a protection force of rapidly deployable mission specialists that agilely fill the gaps in the joint battle space and compliment coalition capabilities.¹⁴

The Navy also states that:

The Reserve Component expeditionary forces are integrated with the Active Component forces to provide a continuum of capabilities unique to the maritime environment within

¹³ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) p. 1-4.

¹⁴ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) p. 4-13.

Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). The Navy Reserve trains and equips 47 percent of Sailors supporting NECC missions, including waterborne and ashore anti-terrorism force protection, in-theater security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, infrastructure maintenance and improvement, and other mission capabilities which are seamlessly integrated with operational forces around the world.¹⁵

Riverine Force

The riverine force is intended to supplement the riverine capabilities of the SEALs and relieve Marines who have been conducting maritime security operations in ports and waterways in Iraq. It consists of three squadrons of 12 boats each, and include a total of about 900 sailors. The Navy established Riverine Group 1 (which oversees the three squadrons) at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA, in May 2006. The first riverine squadron was established in FY2006, deployed to Iraq in March 2007, and returned in October 2007.¹⁶ The second squadron was established in February 2007 and deployed to Iraq in October 2007 to relieve the first squadron.¹⁷ The third squadron was established in July 2007.¹⁸ Following the completion of the first squadron's deployment, the Navy in 2007 reportedly was considering expanding the riverine mission to other parts of Iraq.¹⁹

Global Fleet Stations (GFSs)

The Navy envisages establishing as many as five GFSs around the world, each of which might be built around a single amphibious ship or high-speed sealift ship. Under Navy plans, GFSs could host or support Marines, Navy LCSs or patrol craft, Coast Guard small boats, and Army and Air Force personnel. GFSs under Navy plans would be capable of conducting or supporting various operations, including some that could relate to CT or IW.²⁰

¹⁵ Department of the Navy. Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2010 Budget. Washington, 2009. (May 2009) p. 4-22.

¹⁶ For a discussion of this deployment, see Tim Fish, "RIVRON 1 Claims Success in Tackling Iraqi IEDs, But New Boats May Be Needed," *Jane's Navy International*, January/February 2008: 12-13. See also John Suits, "RIVRON 1 Sailors Return Home," *Navy News Service*, October 23, 2007.

¹⁷ "Riverine Squadron 2 Deploys," *Navy News Service*, October 4, 2007.

¹⁸ Louis Hansen, "Third Riverine Squadron Formally Established At Yorktown," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, July 7, 2007; Chris Johnson, "Navy Creates Third Squadron For Riverine Missions in Iraq," *Inside the Navy*, July 9, 2007; Matthew D. Leistikow, "NECC Establishes Riverine Squadron 3," *Navy News Service*, July 10, 2007.

¹⁹ Chris Johnson, "Navy Mulling Expansion of Riverine Mission to More Areas in Iraq," *Inside the Navy*, July 23, 2007.

²⁰ For more on GFSs, see CRS Report RS21338, *Navy Ship Deployments: New Approaches—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

Potential Oversight Issues for Congress

IW and CT in Future Navy Budgets

An overarching oversight issue for Congress is how much emphasis to place on IW and CT activities in future Navy budgets, and whether decisions reached by DOD on this issue in the QDR are appropriate.

Supporters of placing increased emphasis on IW and CT activities in future Navy budgets could argue that the experience of recent years, including U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, suggests that the United States in coming years will likely need to be able to conduct IW and CT operations, that the Navy has certain specialized or unique IW and CT capabilities that need to be supported as part of an effective overall U.S. IW or CT effort, and that there are programs relating to Navy IW and CT activities that could be funded at higher levels, if additional funding were made available.

Opponents of placing an increased emphasis on IW and CT activities in future Navy budgets could argue that these activities already receive adequate emphasis on Navy budgets, and that placing an increased emphasis on these activities could reduce the amount of funding available to the Navy for programs that support the Navy's role in acting, along with the Air Force, as a strategic reserve for the United States in potential conventional inter-state conflicts.

Potential oversight questions for Congress include the following: To what degree can or should Navy IW and CT activities be used to reduce the burden on other services for conducting such activities? Are the Navy's steps to increase its role in IW and CT partly motivated by concerns about its perceived relevance, or by a desire to secure a portion of IW and CT funding? Is the Navy striking an appropriate balance between IW and CT activities and other Navy concerns, such as preparing for a potential future challenge from improved Chinese maritime military forces?²¹

Regarding how issues relating to Navy IW and CT capabilities might be discussed in the QDR, an April 29, 2009 press report stated that:

The Navy and the nation need to have a lively discussion about the maritime domain and what it takes for the service to operate in that area—including the ability to support and maintain sailors and ships dispersed around the globe, according to [Admiral Gary Roughead,] the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO).

Additionally, the Navy is looking to flush out its requirements for the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) during the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), hoping those discussions will create an opportunity to see how the NECC should evolve....

As the Navy enters into the QDR, Roughead sees the opportunity for discussions about the military at large and the role of the various components within the military, as well as, discussions on the naval capabilities the nation needs, the capacity of those capabilities and the numbers of those capabilities. "That's what we are going to be doing in QDR."

²¹ For additional discussion of this issue, see CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

One topic Roughead is looking to discuss during the QDR is the NECC.

“Clearly, I think we are going to be looking at that under the rubric of irregular warfare...what are the components that make that up,” he said. “For the first time we did a force structure assessment on the expeditionary combat command and remarkably as we went out into the COCOMs there was not a definitive requirement that came through loud and clear on riverine [capabilities]. I want to get into that.”

But the lack of a definitive requirement from the combatant commands should not be seen as the possible demise of the riverine force, Roughead said.

Proof of his support for NECC was demonstrated this year as he pulled funding for the command from the supplemental and, for the first time, placed it into the Navy’s baseline budget.

“My position was, if we are going to have this capability you can’t be hanging it on supplemental funding because if it goes away where are you? So we are migrating NECC into the base budget,” Roughead said. “We’ve developed some costing models for NECC that allow us to better predict what the costs are.”

Roughead views the QDR as a good opportunity for the Navy to also explore where it wants to grow NECC because, in some instances, the sizing of that capability is influenced by the other services as well, he said.

For example, Roughead pointed to the Seabees. “How many do you need? Because of the work they are doing, they are pretty much exclusively focused on Iraq and Afghanistan. So what’s the growth in Army engineers? That’s why the QDR is going to be a good process.”

If the Navy needs more combat engineers and looks to grow its force, and the Army is growing its engineering force, too, is that the optimum way to do that? Roughead said. “The QDR is going to let us get into things like that. The QDR will allow us to better flush out the riverine portion.”

Roughead said the NECC is performing a really good mission and he is trying to get his arms around how much bigger it should grow.

The capability is so good, Roughead said, he has been working with his foreign counterparts to explore a riverine exchange program.

Because of the varying locales the riverine force could operate in—from operations in Iraq to densely forested or complex delta environments—Roughead wants the force to get some different experiences.

“The boats we have are great where they are operating, but how do they hold up in shallower, muddier, thick vegetation areas? I want to find out more about that,” he said.

In the past year and a half, Roughead said he has taken steps to legitimize and put in place things that portend a good future for NECC.

“A future based on getting it into our base budget, getting force structure analysis—not just what people think we should have—but where do we think the demands are going to be? And then getting in and looking at what the internal structure and manning concept should be

for NECC,” he said. “I would say we are doing some good substantive work and good foundational work to really get NECC forward.”²²

A June 1, 2009, press report states:

Much of the current fleet has the capability to perform newer irregular warfare missions, a point which will be key as the Navy determines the right balance of the force—including amphibious lift—in the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review, the service’s top requirements officer said last week.

“When I look at the flexibility of the naval platforms, I think they are full-spectrum platforms that can contribute across all areas,” Vice Adm. Barry McCullough, the deputy chief of naval operations for integration of capabilities and resources, said in a May 27 interview at his Pentagon office. “And so we need to fit within the prescribed guidance that [Defense Secretary Robert Gates] put out, and that’s what we’re working on for balance.”

Gates has recently called for the military force structure to be 50 percent focused on conventional warfare, 10 percent focused on irregular warfare and 40 percent focused on dual-use capability for either conventional or irregular warfare. The QDR, which is now underway, aims to review military force structure writ large.

McCullough said his worry is that the Navy’s irregular warfare capacity has become too narrowly focused on Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, an umbrella for expeditionary capabilities such as explosive ordnance disposal, riverine and naval construction units known as Seabees.

“While their contribution to irregular warfare is great, and they’re very capable and a very professional force, that’s not the sole focus of irregular warfare inside the Navy,” McCullough said.

For example, he said, while aircraft carriers are often cited as the prime example of a conventional warfare capability, the Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) played a pivotal role in supporting relief efforts following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. The Arleigh Burke-class destroyers have also been used in recent irregular warfare capacities, such as the Bainbridge (DDG-96), which aided in the capture and killing of pirates off the coast of Somalia following the hijacking of an American cargo ship.

“That covers the spectrum of warfare,” McCullough said. “That’s not what those ships were designed for, but it just goes to show you the inherent flexibility of naval platforms.”

Amphibious ships are also “ideally suited” for irregular warfare missions, McCullough said, echoing a sentiment voiced by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead in an April 25 meeting with reporters. The Austin-class amphibious dock ship Nashville (LPD-13) just completed a deployment to the Gulf of Guinea region of West Africa for maritime security training and outreach to several African nations, an endeavor known as Africa Partnership Station.

While some have argued that acquiring more coastal patrol boats or 178-foot patrol ships is the right approach to security cooperation missions like APS, McCullough countered that their small size and small crew are limiting.

²² Geoff Fein, “CNO Sees Need For Discussion On Maritime Domain,” *Defense Daily*, April 29, 2009: 1-2. Ellipsis in quote as in the original.

"If you send an amphibious ship, you can interact with a multitude of people in the area where you're trying to conduct theater security cooperation or engagement, and you can train a large majority of those people, because you can bring their craft to your ship or their people to your ship to interact," he said. "So then you've got an ability to influence a much broader spectrum of audience."²³

Specific Oversight Questions

In addition to the overarching issue above, the Navy's IW and CT activities pose some specific potential oversight issues for Congress, including the following:

- How many Navy personnel globally are involved in IW and CT activities, and where are they located? How much funding is the Navy expending each year on such activities?
- Is the Navy adequately managing its IA program?²⁴
- Is the Navy devoting sufficient attention and resources to riverine warfare?²⁵
- Aside from the establishment of the riverine force and a reserve civil affairs battalion, what implications might an expanded Navy role in IW and CT have for Navy force-structure requirements (i.e., the required size and composition of the Navy)?
- Is the Navy adequately coordinating its IW and CT activities and initiatives with other organizations, such as the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Coast Guard?
- Are the Navy's recent IW and CT organizational changes appropriate? What other Navy organizational changes might be needed?

Author Contact Information

Ronald O'Rourke
Specialist in Naval Affairs
rorourke@crs.loc.gov, 7-7610

²³ Rebekah Gordon, "McCullough: Current Fleet Meets Many Irregular Warfare Missions," *Inside the Navy*, June 1, 2009.

²⁴ For a discussion of the Navy's management of the IA program, see Andrew Scutro, "Fleet Forces Takes Charge of IA Program," *NavyTimes.com*, July 7, 2008.

²⁵ For an article that discusses this question from a critical perspective, see Daniel A. Hancock, "The Navy's Not Serious About Riverine Warfare," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 2008: 14-19.